

Remarks

Applicants have canceled claims 42-49, 51, 54, 58, 61, 65, and 71 and have added new claims 77-96. Claims 50, 52-53, 55-57, 59-60, 62-64, 66-70, and 72-96 are currently pending. Support for the added claims is found in the specification and claims as filed.

The claims currently pending, including amendments added herewith are fully supported by the disclosure of parent patent application US 6,207,646 B1, to which the disclosure of the instant application is a continuation in part and to which the instant application claims priority.

Applicants have filed these claims to preserve the right to pursue the subject matter of these claims in view of patent publication US 2003/0216340 (Van Nest et al), serial no. 10/357760, published on November 20, 2003. The claims added in this preliminary amendment correspond to and were substantially copied from the claims of US 2003/0216340. Applicants preserve also the right to seek to have an interference declared with U.S. published patent application US 2003/0216340 (Van Nest et al), serial no. 10/357760, published on November 20, 2003. Applicants, however, do not believe that such an interference is appropriate, as the subject matter of the claims presented herein was invented by Applicants long before the filing date of US 2003/0216340, as is apparent from an inspection of one or more of the applications to which this application claims priority, such as the application now issued as US 6,207,646 B1.

Applicants wish to bring to the attention of the examiner that the disclosure on which the added claims are based and to which the added claims are entitled to priority, and which has now issued as US 6,207,646 B1, was first filed on at least as early as October 30, 1996. US 6,207,646 B1 should be a statutory bar to the patentability of all of the claims of U.S. published patent application US 2003/0216340, but not to the patentability of the claims of this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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